

# An Integrated Approach to Applying “Evidence Best Practices” In Corrections

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Introduction: The science of effective correctional practice is becoming better known and in some jurisdictions even more accepted. As evidenced in today’s current correctional buzz word, “Evidence Based Practices”. While many organizations say the words even to the extent of using the acronym “EBP”, few have developed a conceptual framework for just exactly what does applying Evidence Based Practices mean to organizations and the individuals in the trenches doing the work? Many if not most correctional organizations have approached applying the science in a piece meal fashion, focusing on changes in offender assessment, case planning, and improving staff interviewing skills as separate plans, with little thought as to the integration of these functions. The result of this piece meal approach has been in many jurisdictions miss applied science and increased staff resistance.

There are significant benefits for correctional agencies to draw upon consulting services such as Restorative Correctional Services, (RCS) in developing systemic strategic multilayered approaches to applying “Evidence Based Practices”. Additionally there is a need to clearly articulate and demonstrate at the practitioner level, the integration of theory, principle and practice while attending to the attitudes/beliefs of the people who do the work.

RCS is proud to introduce a curriculum called ***Effective Communication/Motivational Strategies*** developed specifically to integrate learning at the correctional practitioner level while uncovering and responding to staff resistance. Please note the design in the delivery of the material requires modeling the skills and techniques correctional practitioners will need to be more effective with this population as they are learning about their own resistance to change. You will also note the foundation of principles specific to how staff work with resistant criminal populations that are integrated throughout the assessment, case planning and staff interviewing skills materials.

If you are interested in a learning experience that helps staff work with their own resistance to change, while teaching and reinforcing the principles, knowledge and communication skills staff will need to apply, “Evidence Based Practices” please take the time to review the attached materials and references.

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## People and Organizations Using this Material

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## What Are People Saying?

"I have been struggling on a personal and professional level for several years now; to the point I was ready to quit my job. My spending habits were at a point where I thought I couldn't control what was going on in my life. I was feeling hopeless! While I said on the first day of this training that I was a prisoner and not a volunteer, I'm now so grateful to you and the staff at KDOC for this opportunity. This week has changed my life; I'm going back to my job on Monday with some renewed energy and purpose. Thanks so very much, and please share this letter with others who are taking this course."

"Wanted to let you know we had our ECMS training last week with Ray and the first two days this week I've been INUNDATED with people coming to tell me about their various meetings where they used the skills. Seriously, I can't get any work done. Ray will remember Tom.....he said one of his guys thanked him for talking to him (he's been seeing him for a year). Another person said she just can't wait till her next client shows up! A lot of people are saying it is the BEST training (and trainer) they've ever had. These are exciting times....."

"Ray understands adult learners and lays out this training in a manner that allows each participant to learn in steps. Participants increase their level of knowledge, self-understanding and skills as the week progresses. For those who are open-minded and do the work, this training becomes a life and career changing experience."

"In terms of what Ray did correctly, I can only say that this was the best training I have participated in 32 years plus in the field. I have not encountered a trainer who was more skilled or who offers the total package of delivery, worthwhile material and skills that he does."

"ECMS was by far one of the most valuable trainings I have attended in my career. I have attended other "MI" trainings but this is a training that gets to you on several levels: intellectual, working the skills, and gets you in your gut! When you work with your target behavior there is no denying the power of the process. Ray has all the characteristics of a great teacher. He is learned, patient, always encouraging, has perfect pitch when coaching, and he obviously enjoys helping us learn. His style is so comfortable that it invites you in - outside your comfort zone- to try the interview strategies "on for size."

"I attended a one day training event on MI at the ICCA conference in Virginia. It was a therapist who did the training. Of course never got to any practice but I did add to my knowledge about why it works. She said her regular trainings are two days. After working with this for a few months I am even more convinced that the two day training is not what is needed for corrections staff. I am also finding that ECMS is the best training I have found that helps corrections staff buy into the possibility of offender change. I really think for many staff it opens the door the rest of evidence based practices."

## What is “Effective Communication/Motivational Strategies”?

ECMS is 5 day learning experience designed to integrate specific knowledge, (Social Learning Theory, What Works Research, Stages of Change, and Motivational Interviewing) in a conceptual frame work (Understanding Criminal Logic, Offender Management; Risk Control/Risk Reduction Strategies and learning in “learning teams”.) through the demonstration and practice of specific communication skills and techniques that reduce resistance to change. This learning journey exposes staff to their own resistance to change while modeling and practicing the skills to overcome this resistance for themselves and with offenders, teaching staff how to change as they learn how to assist offenders with change.

Based on sound research and proven adult learning methods, each lesson is re-enforced with a participant handbook. The initial training is followed with guide to developing and applying what participants have learned through “learning teams”. The development of these teams and the continued practice of the principles and skills learned during this training is insured through the development of these learning teams. Upon registration for the training, all materials including the participant manuals, power-point slides, and handouts are free to the contracting agency.

### **Day One:**

#### 1. Introduction to overall course:

This is a 2 hour lesson designed to:

- Introduce the material to be covered
- Introduce one tenant of Social Learning Theory, (Early childhood experiences heavily influence personal attitudes and beliefs.)
- Engage the participants in a fun, group learning exercise
- Allow participants the opportunity to introduce themselves
- Establish a shared learning environment

#### 2. Offender Management:

This is a 2 hour lesson designed to:

- Introduce the concepts of *Risk Control and Risk Reduction*
- Describe how these strategies are a package
- Evaluate individual and agency competencies in both strategies

#### 3. Social Learning Theory:

This is a 1 to 2- hour lesson designed to:

- Describe the origins of Social Learning Theory
- Describe the relevance of this theory of human behavior to correctional practices
- Describe the five basic tenants of Social Learning Theory

4. Overview of “What Works” Research:

This is a 2 to 3 hour lesson designed to:

- Introduce the principles of Risk, Need and Responsivity
- Describe the major risk factors associated with adult and juvenile offenders.
- Describe what doesn’t work
- Identify targets for correctional programming

**Day Two:**

5. Criminal Logic:

This is a 3- to 4 hour lesson designed to:

- Give staff a better understanding of criminal thinking as the foundation for “change work” with offenders
- Provide staff with a better understanding and appreciation for why certain programs have better impacts in reducing recidivism with adult and juvenile offenders.
- Provide staff with a better understanding of why certain communication skills and techniques work better than others to reduce offender resistance and increase offender motivation for change.
- Allow staff to practice skills in self-assessment, and self-adjustment in personal attitudes, beliefs and patterns of thinking and feeling.

6. Stages of Change:

This is a 2.5 hour lesson designed to:

- Introduce participants to the concept of stages of change.
- Introduce the concept of communication traps.
- Engage participants in a process that helps them identify their own attitudes and beliefs that may inhibit their ability to use these new skills effectively.
- Introduce participants to the foundational principles behind this work.

**Day Three/Four:**

7. Introduction into Basic Communication Skills:

This is an 8 to 12 hour lesson designed to:

- Introduce and demonstrate competencies in four basic communication skills; asking open-ended questions, reflective listening, repeating,

rephrasing, paraphrasing, reflections of emotions, affirmations, and summarizations.

- Allow participants to practice and receive feedback on the application of these skills.
- Introduce and demonstrate competency in evoking self-motivating statements from resistive offenders using the specific strategies of using Extremes, Looking Forward and Backward, Exploring Goals, Paradox, Evocative questions, Elaboration, and Decisional Balance.

8. Why These Skills Won't Work For Me or My Agency:

This is a 1- hour lesson designed to:

- Explore staff resistance
- Demonstrate the communication skills and techniques used to overcome resistance.

**Day Five:**

9. Learning in "Learning Teams"

This is an 8 hour lesson designed to:

- Introduce the concept of learning in learning teams
- Provide practical application of the communication skills and techniques in small groups
- Review the predictable phases of learning teams
- Review the learning team facilitators guide and role
- Introduce and practice the advanced techniques to responding to staff/offender resistance